



ACE Africa
Accelerating Circular Economy in Africa

Building Capacity for Circular Economy Innovation Series

Session 2: Designing systems and policy frameworks for circular economy innovation

POST EVENT REPORT



March 2022 | 14h00-15h15 SAST

The second session, titled 'Designing systems and policy frameworks for circular economy innovation' is part of a six series of events titled 'Building Capacity for Circular Economy Innovation'. The session presented existing and potential policy and legislative frameworks which can serve as a solid foundation to designing circular systems. It aimed to explore the role strengthening policies can play in enabling the growth of circular economy businesses in Africa and extrapolated recommendations on how Africa can develop local, regional and national road maps to align with circular road maps and policies in the global arena. The session held on March 8, 2022, and was co-convened by ICLEI Africa and Africa Circular Economy Network as part of the ACE Africa Action and Learning Events.

Panelists for the session included Cathrine Barth (Co-Founder, Circular Norway) and Venan Sondo (Lead, Chaint Afrique). Daniel Adeniyi (Professional Officer, ICLEI Africa) and Oluwakemi Ajakaiye (Chapter Lead, ACEN Nigeria) gave the welcome and introductory remarks to set the tone.

Cathrine Barth in her presentation titled 'Circular City Transition Strategies: Nordic approach to circular transition' stressed the importance of an ISO standard in achieving circular economic transition, and noted that it is an economic system that uses a systematic approach to maintain a circular flow of resources by regenerating, retaining or adding to their value, while contributing to sustainable development. She highlighted that globally the circular economy is only 9% circular, less than 10% of materials are making it into loops and emphasised that basic human needs drive consumption of material flows and circular change across sectors and value chains. Cathrine unpacked the aspects of the Circular City System and discussed how policies can be designed to accommodate a variety of sectors. She further discussed the circular procurement process as a maturity tool for development and the Circular City Life Manifesto which looked at human centric and nature positive city development.

In his contribution to the session, Venan Sondo noted that Chaint Afrique is an organisation that focuses on enabling Africa's transition to a circular economy. He emphasised the need for a systematic shift to achieve the 2030 goals and noted that in order for the sustainable development goals to be achieved, the organisation focuses on a 4-policy approach, where sustainable living has to be affordable, available, accessible and aspirational for all. He noted that money used to address poor sanitation in African countries provided an opportunity that could have been leveraged to accelerate transformational economic growth. He noted that the lack of policy impedes any good work being done. There is no existing underlying policy or indicators that guide and support what needs to be done, thus making it difficult to attract investment and gain traction. While designing policy, it is important to focus on the use of local materials without relying on imported material. He stressed that

policy development should focus on a sectoral and inclusive approach in contrast to a siloed approach.

Bezawit Eshetu presented a case study on a Kenyan company recycling plastics into brick. She added that the motivation behind the case study is if companies are not supported by policies, they might not be accepted in the community and may find it difficult to thrive. She further questioned the kind of expertise or policy incentives that allow innovative solutions to be sold in the markets and look forward to circular economy principles to address them. She noted that implementing policies such as bans without providing alternatives usually does not work.

Oluwakemi Ajakaiye opened the floor up to participants to ask questions or share their experience. Responding to a question from the audience on how to access the circle city scan tool, and whether it includes African countries, Cathrine responded that the tool is accessible, includes African cities, and is for global generic use.

Responding to the question of how higher education and research institutions can achieve sustainable development goals together with the government to make stronger policies, Cathrine responded that academic institutions are siloed based and need to become more holistic in building knowledge as emphasis is still mostly placed on a linear economy approach. Venan responded that there are a few MBA courses in Ghana that integrate aspects of sustainability in the curriculum. He noted that if academia, industry and governments work together, policy becomes easier to shape.

Responding to the question of how policy can play a role in driving circular economy initiatives, Venan responded that current policy does not look at what works and what does not work. Policies should play a role in identifying what can be done to unlock what is working at the moment. He highlighted the importance of having monitoring and evaluation elements in circular economy policies. He stressed that policies should be holistic and consider how various facets of the economy interact with each other.

Responding to the question of barriers and bottlenecks that are limiting Africa in policy formulation and resource efficiency, Cathrine responded by focusing on the opportunities and highlighted that scarcity might pose a key enabler for evolving into a circular economy. Venan added that there is a lack of understanding of the opportunities that exist within the circular economy, noting that there are a lot of competent people in Africa that are unable to relate to what is occurring on the ground in terms of how policies are articulated, and the effectiveness of such policies.

The session ended with a vote of thanks by the facilitator.